

THE GAINESVILLE STAR

DEVOTED TO THE MORAL, BUSINESS AND POLITICAL INTERESTS OF CITY, COUNTY AND STATE.

VOLUME 1

GAINESVILLE, FLORIDA, TUESDAY, DECEMBER 15, 1903.

NO. 67

THE TURPENTINE WOODS AND MEN

One of Florida's Biggest Money-Making Industries.

HOW THE GUM IS SECURED.

From Pine Tree to Market. Via the Distillery—The Colored Man's Part.

To one who was born and raised in a turpentine country, and knows the business from A to Z, it is amusing to hear some people talk about the business, and ask questions about how the spirits and rosin is obtained, where consumed and what for, etc. It is also amusing to read some descriptions of turpentine farms, work, tools, etc., that sometimes find their way into print.

Notwithstanding the fact that the turpentine (naval stores) business is, and has been for the last past several years one of Florida's leading industries, there are comparatively few men in the State today—aside from those who are in some way engaged in the business—who seem to have anything like a correct idea of how crude turpentine is secured, how manufactured or the manufactured product is disposed of, or for what purpose.

Many men who can give correct information on almost any other subject they attempt to talk on will tell you that the turpentine operators have destroyed about all the pine timber in the country by cutting immense "notches" in the trees, and then having "niggers" to go to every one of those "notches" once every week and "scratch" a streak there causing the tree to bleed itself to death. Some have declared that the trees all fall down and die, because of the "notches" cut in them, every time the wind blows. They don't seem to think that felling the trees and sawing them into lumber is one half as destructive to them as cutting those "notches," and bleeding the trees.

They will tell you that every three or four weeks a "nigger" is sent around to every one of those "notches," and with a "big iron spoon" he scrapes out the gum that has accumulated in those "notches," puts it in a big wooden bucket, empties the bucket into a big barrel until it is full, then in another barrel, and so on, until all the "notches" are cleaned out. They describe the entire business, from beginning to end, but their description gives no one an intelligent understanding of the business, and often does the turpentine operators a great injustice.

HOW IT IS DONE.

The turpentine (naval stores) man buys or leases his timber for a given price per acre, or per thousand. If by the acre of course the more densely timbered the land is the cheaper comes his turpentine privilege, but if by the thousand, it matters not so much whether the land is densely or sparsely timbered. Some acres may have more than ten times as much timber on them as some others have, and the cost to the operator is in proportion to the amount of timber on the land.

The operator puts men (usually negroes) in the woods during the winter months and with long narrow axes, made for the purpose and known as turpentine box axes, they box (not notch) the timber. The pine trees will bear from one to four or five boxes to the tree, but two boxes is a very fair average for the average Florida pine tree. These boxes are not what would ordinarily be termed boxes, but "pockets" might seem to be a more appropriate name for them, though they are called "boxes" throughout turpentine country. The "pockets," or "boxes" where the trees are large enough to bear it, are usually from 6 to 7 inches deep, from 3 1/2 to 4 inches in the back, and 12 to 13 inches across the face. Few men who are not acquainted with the business would know what is meant by these dimensions, and we are frank to confess that a word explanation is a difficult task, but the turpentine hand readily understands it. When he is told by the foreman that he must cut a 6 1/2, 3 1/2 and 13 inch box, he understands that the box must be 6 1/2 inches deep down toward the root of the tree from where the axe enters; the opening must be 3 1/2 inches from the bark on the tree in toward the center, and 13 inches across, or around on the outside of the tree. He understands that the box is to be bowl-shaped, or hollowed out so that it will hold about a quart of "gum." Most turpentine hands know just how to shape the box, but many of them will fail to do it right if the inspector will allow them to do so. When one is told by the inspector to "stump out" a box he understands that he is wanted to do the cutting next to the sap of the tree, and not go in so far toward the center, and when the boxes are thus properly cut they do not injure the timber as badly as some believe they do.

From 1 1/4 to 1 1/2 cent each is the price usually paid for cutting these boxes, and many able-bodied men can cut from 100 to 150 of them in a day. Ten thousand five hundred of these boxes—usually covering an area of from 125 to 200 acres—is a full "crop," and a good chipper can chip a crop in from 4 to 5 days, and generally gets \$5 and a week's rations for doing it. The chipping (called by some "scratching") is done with a tool called a hack, and is made for the purpose. Chipping means the putting of a fresh "streak" directly over each box once a week. By the "streak" is meant the cutting of the sap of the tree about one inch deep and about one-half inch up the tree, so that the cut can be kept fresh and bleeding, or running as the turpentine men say.

Where the timber is good for turpentine 3 or 4 of these once-a-week streaks will cause the tree to bleed enough to fill the box below, and then with a flat iron shaped to fit the box, and called a turpentine dipper, the boxes are emptied, the gum put into barrels of about 50 gallons capacity, hauled to the distillery and converted into spirits of turpentine and rosin. For this dipping the hands are paid from 30 to 40 cents a barrel, and a good dipper can dip from 3 to 5 barrels a day.

From a well filled barrel of crude gum can be extracted from 12 to 13 gallons of spirits of turpentine, which leaves about a commercial barrel (280 lbs.) of rosin. Rosin sells according to its grade, and there are many grades. The two finest grades are W. W. and W. G. (water white and window glass) and cannot be made except from "virgin gum"—that produced the first year after the boxes are cut—and the efficiency and care of the man who runs the distillery has much to do with grades of rosin made.

In Florida the boxes are usually worked two or three to four or five years. In the Carolinas and Georgia they have been worked as many as twenty years, and pines are often re-boxed, which is called back-boxing, and then virgin gum is secured again.

At this time spirits and rosin—all grades of rosin—is bringing a fancy price. Turpentine men are making money, but there are only a few people who understand anything about the trials and expense they have to encounter. Timber and supplies are up in price, labor is very unreliable, and many other difficulties confront the turpentine men. They are usually a big-hearted, liberal set of men, and our own knowledge of the business enables us to know that the business is not understood by the average citizen, and its bad effect on timber is greatly exaggerated.

HOLLOWAY IN PALATKA.

What the Palatka News Has to Say of Him as a Candidate.

The Palatka News in speaking of the political meeting held in that city last Wednesday night, has the following to say of Prof. Holloway:

"Prof. W. M. Holloway of Gainesville, candidate for State Superintendent of Public Instruction was next introduced. But the hour was late and many of the audience had the 'put me in my little bed' fever. Many encouraged the feeling and went home. They missed something. Prof. Holloway is a man who knows how to get his audience good natured and keep them so. He told of the hot times he had been having in his home county with his opponent, Supt. Sheats, and it was funny. Then he recited in brief his autobiography in a modest manner, and showed something of his accomplishments. He also showed why he thought Mr. Sheats had outlived his official usefulness. Mr. Holloway was brief. He had respect for his audience's tired feeling and his own throat, which had got raspy from over talking in Alachua. But he caught the people, and they saw he was constructed of the right material for a good state superintendent. He has hundreds of warm supporters here and will gain more."

Advertised Letters.

List of unclaimed letters in the post-office at Gainesville, Fla., for the week ending Dec. 12, 1903. Persons calling for same should say advertised and give date. One cent is due on each letter.

LADIES.

Mrs. W. E. Calhoun, Miss Mamie Flamm, Miss Sussie Hodson, Mrs. Julia Yunge.

GENTLEMEN.

F. C. Brown, F. E. Cellon, Fome Freeman, Arthur Harvin, Oma Johnson, C. L. W. Jones, J. W. Smith, Robert Simmons, Robert Walker, Jonnie Whitker.

G. J. ARNOW, P. M.

Jacksonville Hotel.

The New Travelers Hotel, H. W. Hancock proprietor and K. W. Campbell assistant manager, is the place to stop when you go to Jacksonville. Nice rooms, good table fare, reasonable rates, and centrally located—on Bay street, in business center. Mr. Campbell is of Waldo, Alachua county, and it will afford him pleasure to treat nicely people from his home county when they go to Jacksonville.

When you go to Jacksonville and want good fare and polite attention at reasonable cost, inquire for the "Travelers' Hotel," and when you go to Green Cove Springs stop at the Riverside Hotel, of which Mr. Hancock is also proprietor.

For Sheriff.

To the Voters of Alachua County:

I hereby announce myself a candidate for the office of Sheriff, subject to the action of the next Democratic primary.

If elected, I promise to discharge my duties of the office to the very best of my ability, and I solicit the support of all voters at the polls.

Respectfully,

W. C. HAGUE.

The STAR is \$1 a Year.

MR. M'CUEN'S FUNERAL.

Conducted at Baptist Church Sunday—Masonic Honors.

The remains of Mr. E. B. McCuen, an account of whose sad death at St. Luke's Hospital, Jacksonville, appeared in Friday's Star, arrived in this city via the Seaboard Air Line railroad Saturday, and were laid to rest in Evergreen Cemetery Sunday.

The funeral services were held in the First Baptist Church, Rev. J. B. Holley was minister and Robt. McClellan funeral director, and many relatives and friends of the deceased were present. Of near relatives he leaves to mourn his sad death a step mother, Mrs. Lillie McCuen, and half sister, Mrs. J. H. Walker, in Santa Fe, New Mexico, and a sister, Mrs. P. E. Tomkins, of this city.

After the services at the church the remains were taken charge of by members of P. A. M. Lodge No. 41, of which he was a member, and the burial was with the honors peculiar to the Masonic order.

A. C. L. Holiday Rates.

Holiday rates via Atlantic Coast Line. The Atlantic Coast Line announce the rate of one and one-third fares plus 25 cents for the round trip for Christmas holidays. Tickets will be sold December 23-25, inclusive, December 30, and 31, 1903, January 1, with return limit January 4, 1904. Teachers and students of schools and colleges will be accorded same rate, tickets to be sold December 16-22, inclusive, with return limit January 8, 1904, upon presentation of certificate signed by superintendents, principals or presidents. All information cheerfully furnished.

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Try Fagan's market for best meats.

Rev. Vandiah Ellis of Alachua was in the city yesterday.

J. F. Whetston of Mikesville is transacting business in the city.

Mr. and Mrs. W. C. Hague were in the city yesterday from Hague.

Have your clothing cleaned at Owen Lloyd's Dye Works. July 14, if

Mrs. O. L. York of Arredondo was shopping in Gainesville yesterday.

J. L. Medlin of Meridith was a business visitor to Gainesville yesterday.

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Attorney Chris Matheson made a professional visit to Arredondo yesterday.

H. W. Tomkins, a leading citizen of Micanopy, was transacting business here yesterday.

R. S. Bradley of Wacahoota and D. T. English of Tacoma were shopping in the city Saturday.

Mr. and Mrs. L. C. Gracy and children of High Springs, were shopping in the city Saturday.

W. J. Mathews, a prominent farmer citizen of Donnie, was among yesterday's visitors to the city.

Mrs. Millie Dozier of Jacksonville was the guest of her sister, Mrs. H. C. Denton, the first of the week.

Jno. R. Zetrouer, one of the leading citizens of Rochelle, was in Gainesville on business yesterday.

Judge J. T. Stokes and ex-Judge L. J. Knight were in the city yesterday from their homes at LaCrosse.

C. V. McQueen, a prominent citizen of the West End, was in the city yesterday from his home at Lexington.

Mr. and Mrs. W. E. Bryan left yesterday for Micanopy, where they will spend a few days with relatives and friends.

Mrs. Robinson and daughters, of Rhode Island, arrived in the city a few days ago, and will spend the winter here.

Mrs. Dr. Flake left Sunday evening for Archer, where she will visit her children and grand children for a week or more.

M. G. Knight and F. B. Atwater, two of High Springs' enterprising citizens, were among the visitors to the city yesterday.

Giddings' Hair Grower does the work. For Sale by Dr. S. B. Giddings, Gainesville, and the Postoffice Drug Store and J. A. Stephens, High Springs, Fla.

M. W. Wooding, acting route agent for the Southern Express Company, has returned from an extended visit to Havana, Cuba.

Old newspapers, suitable for wrapping purposes, 15 cts. a hundred or 25 for 5 cts., at THE STAR office.

G. W. Easterlin and A. E. Summers, two prominent business men of High Springs, were transacting business in the city yesterday.

If you want money to buy or build a home, pay off mortgage, or contract for a profitable investment see Movers.

F. B. Simonton, Micanopy; W. G. Richardson, Tacoma, and Jno. V. Denton, Lake View, were among the shoppers in the city Saturday.

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Rev. J. B. Holley is getting out his Southern Baptist under very great disadvantages this week. The type is having to be set by hand, and printers are scarce.

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